

INSPECTION REPORT

TURVES GREEN BOYS' TECHNOLOGY COLLEGE

Northfield

LEA area: Birmingham

Unique reference number: 103500

Headteacher: Mr K Nimmo

Lead inspector: Mr M Newton

Dates of inspection: 26th - 29th April 2004

Inspection number: 258840

Inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of students:	11 - 16
Gender of students:	Male
Number on roll:	666
School address:	Turves Green Northfield Birmingham West Midlands
Postcode:	B31 4BS
Telephone number:	(0121) 475 4129
Fax number:	(0121) 478 3705
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr John Gibson
Date of previous inspection:	January 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

This school is a well established boys' technology college. There are 666 boys aged 11 to 16 on roll, which is less than most secondary schools nationally. The school is well thought of in its local community of Longbridge in south west Birmingham and is heavily over subscribed. Most students live close to the school in an area where socio-economic factors are below average. The proportion of students entitled to free school meals is above average. Students are mostly of White-British origin and there are no students who are at an early stage of learning English. The percentage with special educational needs and with formal statements of special educational need is broadly average, as is the attainment of students on entry.

The school is involved in the Excellence in Cities initiative and is actively involved in the Birmingham South West Area Network of secondary schools (SWAN) that shares good practice and training. To ensure the inclusion of all students in the community, the school works closely with its three neighbouring primary and secondary schools. For the last two years, the school has gained the Department for Education and Science (DfES) Achievement Award as well as similar awards from the Specialist Schools' Trust.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
2494	Mr M Newton	Lead inspector	Special educational needs
9189	Mr J Horwood	Lay inspector	
3958	M Cawdron	Team inspector	English as an additional language English
23082	G Loach	Team inspector	Mathematics
12016	C O'Leary	Team inspector	Science
10817	G Rayner	Team inspector	Information and communication technology Geography
30128	S Stanley	Team inspector	Religious education Music
34161	P Haddon	Team inspector	Art and design
30216	A Elliott	Team inspector	Citizenship History
1759	G Edwards	Team inspector	Design and technology
13155	J Dixon	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
15724	M Thompson	Team inspector	Physical education

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

As a result of very good leadership and high quality teaching, this is a **very effective school giving very good value for money**. Standards are improving and students' achievement is good. The school has a caring and inclusive ethos that supports all students in their learning. Links with parents, the community and partner schools are excellent.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The excellent leadership of senior staff has established a clear culture of self-evaluation and improvement.
- The very good quality of teaching and learning helps students achieve well.
- The inclusive ethos of the school makes a significant contribution to students' personal development and academic success.
- The high levels of support and guidance helps meet the needs of all students, including those with special educational needs and those who are gifted and talented.
- The positive attitudes to learning and very good behaviour derive from a high degree of respect among students for their teachers.
- The excellent links established with the parents, the wider community and partner institutions impacts positively on the high quality of provision provided by the school.
- The quality of marking is inconsistent and does not always inform students on how to improve.
- There is a relative weakness in management and governance in failing to clearly define all policies and procedures and plan for the improvement of accommodation in the main building.

Since the last inspection the school has improved significantly as a result of the positive actions taken. Standards have risen to above average levels, particularly in Years 7 to 9. Attendance is now above average. The provision for students with special educational needs has risen to very good. A short GCSE course in religious education for all students has been introduced and standards are now above average. Although the school is still not providing a daily act of collective worship, the provision for spiritual development has improved and is now good. Attention to health and safety, particularly by the governors, is still not given a high enough priority for a site of this age.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Performance in GCSE/GNVQ examinations at the end of Year 11, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2001	2002	2003	2003
	D	C	C	A

Key: A - well above average; B - above average; C - average; D - below average; E - well below average.

Similar schools are those whose students attained similarly at the end of Year 9.

Overall achievement across the school is good. Students now enter the school with levels of attainment that are broadly average. By the end of Year 9, standards achieved in national tests are above average when judged both against those of boys, girls and all students, nationally. When compared with the results in schools with students from a similar background, the school's results are in the top five per cent nationally. This represents very good achievement and is reflected in the good standard of work seen in most subjects. The schools' GCSE results in 2003 showed significant improvement on previous years with above average results, although the average point score was in line with the national average. Work seen during the inspection in Years 10 and 11 was generally above average and indicates good achievement by students in those years.

Students' attitudes, values and personal qualities are very good. Relationships within the school are very good and students benefit from the harmonious atmosphere. Very good behaviour stems from the high expectations enshrined in the rights and responsibilities code that everyone subscribes to. Students' attitudes to learning and their personal development are also very good. Parents rate very highly the contribution the

school makes to developing mature young adults. Their moral and social awareness is excellent, their cultural awareness is very good and their spiritual awareness is now good.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is very good. The quality of teaching is very good overall. In over half of all lessons, teaching is very good or excellent. In the majority of other lessons, it is good and there is no unsatisfactory teaching. As a result, students respond positively and **learning is also very good.** The thorough assessment and review of students' progress and the challenging targets set all contribute to high achievement. There is a genuine focus on the needs of individuals that is reflected in all aspects of the provision. The level of support and guidance students receive is excellent. The provision for students with special educational needs and those who are gifted and talented is very good. The opportunities provided by the curriculum are good overall and enriched by an excellent array of extra curricular provision which the majority of students benefit from. The strong links with parents, the community provision, and the collaboration with neighbouring schools are excellent and enhance the inclusive nature of the school.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management of the school are very good. The leadership of the headteacher and the leadership team are excellent. They work closely as a team and provide a clear direction towards improvement. They are well supported by other key staff, who share their vision to raise standards and meet the needs of all students. Management overall is very effective but in places lacks precision so that procedures are not always as clear as they might be. Overall governance is good. Governors are supportive of the school and meet most of their statutory duties but only partially fulfil the requirement for a daily act of collective worship. There is a lack of focus on the strategic development of buildings to meet the needs of the curriculum and in identifying potential health and safety matters.

PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are very positive about the school and this is reflected in the popularity of the school in the community. There were no issues of general concern raised by parents. All parents appreciate the fact that staff expect students to work hard. Similarly, students are very positive. They too acknowledge that they are expected to do their best and appreciate the efforts of their teachers in helping them achieve well.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

The most important things the school should do to improve are:

- Improve the quality and consistency of marking in all subjects to bring it to the level of the best.
- Senior managers and governors should ensure that all policies and procedures are up-to-date and easily accessible on a need to know basis.
- Attention should be given, particularly by the governors, to the strategic development of the main accommodation to meet the requirements of the curriculum.

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- Provide a daily act of collective worship.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

The achievement of students overall is good throughout the school. In the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, it is very good, particularly in Years 7, 8 and 9. Standards overall are above the national average, as reflected in tests and examination results. The standards of work seen during inspection are also above average, except in mathematics and science in Years 10 and 11, where they are in line with national averages.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There has been an upward trend in national tests and examination results since the last inspection.
- The achievement of students is consistently good or better in all subjects and recognised in recent awards.
- Achievement is considerably better at both Years 9 and 11 than in schools with students from a similar background and with similar prior attainment.
- The value added to students' attainment is well above average at Year 9 and above average at Year 11.
- Standards of work seen in Years 7, 8 and 9 are consistently above average.
- Students have good levels of competence in literacy, the use of number and in information and communication technology (ICT).
- Standards of work seen in mathematics and science in Years 10 and 11 are not as high as in other areas.
- Standards in citizenship are below those of other subjects.

Commentary

1. The improvement and attainment of students over recent years have been recognised by both the Department for Education and Science and the Specialist Schools' Trust in the awards made to the school in 2003 and 2004. The attainment of students on entry in 2003 was broadly average but had tended to fluctuate from below to broadly average in previous years. Boys of higher ability are not so well represented in any of the year groups.
2. In the National Curriculum tests for Year 9 in 2003, the overall performance of students, as measured by their average point score, was above the national average, and that of both boys and girls nationally. The percentage of students gaining Level 5 or higher was above average in English, mathematics and science. Of particular note, is the fact that the percentage achieving Level 6 and above was also above the national average. The 'value added' score, which is a measure of progress from the end of Year 6 in primary school, was well above average. In English and mathematics, students reached standards well above those of students nationally of similar ability and overall the school achieved very much better than similar schools. Since the last inspection, attainment in national tests has risen at a rate higher than the national trend.

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 9 – average point scores in 2003

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	35.1 (31.9)	33.4 (33.3)
mathematics	36.7 (33.6)	35.4 (34.7)
science	34.5 (31.8)	33.6 (33.3)

There were 127 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

3. The standards in the work seen in Years 7 to 9 during the inspection were consistently above average across all National Curriculum subjects. Achievement is well above average in English, mathematics, science and history, and above average in all other subjects except citizenship, where it is average. The

school's adoption of the recommendations of the National Strategy for Years 7 to 9 has had a significant impact on standards and in particular has meant that students' literacy, number and ICT skills are above average.

- In the GCSE examinations in 2003 the percentage of students gaining five or more A*-C grades was above average and the percentage gaining five or more A*-G grades was well above the national average. The average point score was average, as in 2002, indicating that the percentage of the highest grades was below average. Improvement since the last inspection is reflected not only in the percentage gaining five or more grades A*-C but in the fact that the average point score has risen at a faster rate than in schools nationally. Students did better than boys nationally and marginally better than all students overall. The 'value added' measure for the 2003 cohort was above average and indicates good achievement. The school achieved very well in comparison to schools with students of similar background and prior attainment.

Standards in GCSE/GNVQ examinations at the end of Year 11 in 2003

	School results	National results
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	59 (48)	52 (50)
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	97 (98)	91 (91)
Percentage of students gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	101 (100)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	35.6 (33.3)	34.7 (34.8)

There were 118 students in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

- In GCSE subjects in 2003, design and technology, communication studies and French emerged as the strongest subjects with results for A*-C grades significantly above the national average. Results in English language and literature, science, art, and sports studies were also above average. More able students from Year 10 entered early for statistics also achieved above the national average, as did a small group of Year 9 students in drama. Results were below average in mathematics but work seen during the inspection, as with science, is average. The standards of work seen in other subjects are generally above average.
- The school exceeded its targets in national tests and examinations last year by a significant margin. Targets for this year are above those set for 2003 but below those achieved. These are realistic in the light of data the school has on students' prior attainment.
- Students with special educational needs make good progress. As a result of the individual attention they receive, they achieve well. Gifted and talented students are also clearly identified and their needs catered for both within lessons and by enrichment activities. Their progress is good and they achieve well.
- Standards of literacy are above average, enabling students to achieve well in most subjects. Students demonstrate a good knowledge of subject terminology and are able to write confidently in a number of different forms. Students are applying their skills in the use of mathematics well in most subjects, particularly science, design and technology and physical education. The use of ICT across the curriculum is well established and most subjects make a good contribution to developing students' competence. Overall when students use computers their capability is above average,

Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Attendance and punctuality are very good. Behaviour is very good throughout the school. Students' attitudes to learning and relationships with each other and with adults are very good. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students is overall, very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school's excellent promotion of good relationships and its procedures for dealing with any issues ensure that there is freedom from any bullying, racism and other forms of harassment.
- Relationships within the school are always very good and often excellent.
- Behaviour is very good, reflecting the high expectations of staff.
- Attendance is well above local and national averages and improving as a result of efforts by the school.
- Students' moral and social awareness are excellent.

Commentary

9. Students are very supportive of the school and are keen to attend. Attendance is well above the national average and continuing to improve – this is extremely good in an area where attendance is generally below the national average and also for a boys' school. The monitoring of attendance and punctuality is very good with very good procedures to encourage high attendance. Parents are always contacted on the first day of absence.
10. Behaviour is at least very good throughout the school with any inappropriate behaviour dealt with consistently and quickly by teachers, ensuring that learning is not affected. The number of fixed term exclusions is average for this type of school but the number of permanent exclusions is below the national average. This reflects the fact that the school's inclusive and supportive ethos and its use of internal exclusion and fixed term exclusions are effective. Students confirmed that bullying is very rare but if it does occur it is dealt with quickly and well. The promotion of high expectations is excellent with confidential methods, such as a 'bully box', available for students to raise concerns.
11. Students' attitudes to the school and to work are very good, resulting in a very good learning environment within classrooms, where they work enthusiastically. Students participate fully in school life with many arriving very early and staying late to take part in both organised and self-generated activities.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	6.9	School data	0.4
National data	7.2	National data	1.1

The table gives the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

Exclusions

Ethnic background of students

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No. of students on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	615	22	1
White – Irish	5	0	0
White – any other White background	4	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	17	3	0
Mixed – White and Black African	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	4	0	0
Mixed – Any other mixed background	3	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	1	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	5	0	0
Black or Black British – African	3	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	5	0	0
Parent/student preferred not to say	2	0	0

The table gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of students excluded.

12. Students' moral and social awareness is excellent. Opportunities for enrichment and extra-curricular provision are excellent and make a significant contribution to the students' personal development. The 'Rights and Responsibilities' charter that operates effectively throughout the school helps develop mature young adults. Sufficient time is allocated for the personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme and this provides good opportunities for the formal teaching of important aspects of personal development.
13. Students' spiritual awareness and experience are good. They are enriched through such subjects as English, religious education, music and physical education. In the curriculum as a whole, opportunities are sometimes missed for reflection and the development of independent curiosity. There is no daily act of collective worship but those assemblies held are worthwhile occasions and most provide opportunities for prayer or reflection as well as containing a moral message. Students clearly respect the views and beliefs of others and are willing to share their thoughts and feelings when given the opportunity to do so
14. Students' cultural awareness is very good. They are aware of their own cultural heritage and that of others. They appreciate a range of multicultural music and through religious education they develop an awareness of world religions and global cultures. There are many visits to places of cultural and educational interest and there are visitors to the school who enrich the curriculum.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is very good. Provision for both students with special educational needs and those who are gifted and talented is very good. The quality and range of the curriculum are good overall. There are very good arrangements for the students' care and welfare and the provision of soundly-based support and

advice is excellent. Links with parents, the community and partner schools are excellent. All these factors make significant contributions to standards and achievement.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is very good overall, with particular strengths in Years 7 to 9. Assessment of students' work is well established and they are set realistic but challenging targets as a result of the very good use of data. Day to day marking of students' work is not consistent across all subjects at informing them how they can improve.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have the best interest of students at heart and encourage and engage with them in order to meet their needs as learners.
- Teachers' planning is very thorough and based on a good knowledge of their subject and of the students' needs.
- The recommendations of the National Strategy are widely used in Years 7 to 9 to enhance the quality of teaching and learning.
- Very good assessment processes are used so that teachers and students know how well they are achieving.
- The use of marking to provide informative feedback to students is inconsistent.

Commentary

15. In over half of the lessons teaching is very good or excellent. In a further third, it is good, so that overall, in nearly nine out of ten lessons, teaching, and the learning that accompanies it, is good. This very good level of teaching is a significant improvement since the last inspection and is a major factor in the rising achievement of students since 1999.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 104 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
7 (7%)	48 (46%)	38 (36%)	11 (11%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons. Figures in brackets show percentages where 30 or more lessons are seen.

16. There are three key factors in evidence that contribute to this very good level of teaching:
- The focus on improvement by those in leadership in the school. This is seen in school and departmental plans that give teaching and learning a high priority. It is also reflected in the continuing professional development of staff.
 - The appointment of three Advanced Skills Teachers, who have provided a catalyst for the dissemination of good practice and provided support to individual teachers.
 - The introduction of the strategies recommended by the National Strategy has improved the quality of teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 and is beginning to bring similar benefits in Years 10 and 11 also.
17. Teaching is very good overall in English, French, mathematics, history, religious education, music, physical education and citizenship. It is good in all other subjects. In the very best lessons in, for example, mathematics, history and religious education, teachers' planning is exemplary and lessons use a range of innovative strategies. Tasks in these lessons are challenging, use a variety of resources and move at a brisk pace. These features interest and engage students so that they aspire to the high expectations set and their learning and achievement are enhanced. There are no significant weaknesses in teaching.

18. The use of ICT is well established in many subjects and enhances students' learning. However, the school has difficulty keeping up with demand and providing adequate access for all. There is excellent use of resources in music. Good use is made of ICT resources in, for example, English, design and technology, and science. Its use is underdeveloped in mathematics, geography, religious education, art and design and French.
19. The inclusive nature of the school means that the needs of most students are generally being met. Teachers are very aware of students' needs and use the very good individual education plans for those students with special educational needs. Teachers set appropriate tasks for these students and give them individual attention. Very good support is provided by learning support assistants. Sometimes, these students are withdrawn from normal lessons so that their needs can be more fully addressed in smaller groups. Similarly, those students who are gifted and talented are well catered for.
20. Homework is used well to extend knowledge and understanding. Parents and pupils consider that an adequate amount is set.
21. Assessment and target setting are well established throughout the school. The use made of assessments is very good and is particularly effective at Years 7 to 9. Assessment processes are very well developed in English, science, religious education and music, and are developing well in other subjects. Information on departmental and student progress is gathered and analysed regularly and is the basis for monitoring students' progress. Teachers are becoming more skilled in using information for a range of purposes and can see the value of developing these skills to improve the quality of teaching and learning. They now have a common language through which they can discuss school and student targets effectively. The result is that students, parents and teachers are aware of how well students are doing and they are set realistic but challenging targets.
22. The use of marking to provide informative and constructive feedback to students is inconsistent. In some subjects, some teachers' marking is of very high quality, for example, in design and technology, history and religious education. In others, such as English and science, the quality varies and it does not always help students identify the steps they need to take to improve their work.

The curriculum

The quality and range of the curriculum are good overall. There are excellent opportunities for enrichment and for participation in sport. There is a good match of teachers' expertise to meet the requirements of the curriculum and very good support from other staff. The accommodation and resources are adequate.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The opportunities for additional study, visits and extra-curricular activities are excellent and valued by students.
- Provision for students with special educational needs and those who are gifted and talented is very good.
- The curriculum reflects the designation of the school and the needs of students well.
- Students are very well prepared for the later stages in their lives.
- The match of teachers to the curriculum is good and the work of support staff is very good.
- Accommodation is generally adequate but it limits learning opportunities in, for example, science and physical education.
- The school currently does not meet the recommended number of teaching hours and this limits the breadth of the curriculum and the allocation of time to some subjects, such as religious education and physical education, where standards are affected.

Commentary

23. The curriculum caters well for the interests, aptitudes and particular needs of its students. The management of the curriculum is good. It is regularly reviewed with adjustments being made in the light of performance data and the needs of students. Equality of access and opportunity to the

curriculum are very good. The requirement for a daily act of collective worship is only partially met but this does not affect standards.

24. Students have a satisfactory curriculum in Years 7 to 9, studying all the National Curriculum subjects, including religious education. In addition, all students have one period of PSHE a week. There are no other enhancements except that a small number of Year 8 and Year 9 students, mainly gifted and talented, have the opportunity to study for GCSE drama after school. In order to provide a common base for work in ICT, all students in Year 7 have a discrete lesson and there are plans for this to roll on to other years. In order to cater for students' needs, they are grouped into three ability bands on entry. The third band comprises a small class of students with lower attainment, who receive good support in this environment. Setting across a year group, mainly for core subjects, is gradually and appropriately introduced throughout Years 7 to 9.
25. The curriculum is broader in Years 10 and 11 with a good range of subjects. Students have the opportunity for choice even within some compulsory areas so that each experiences a broad and balanced curriculum that meets their needs. Within some subjects, such as English, French and geography, some students will study for a certificate of achievement rather than GCSE. Vocational subjects are being successfully introduced as, for example, in manufacturing and ICT. A small group follow a work skills programme that is facilitated by an outside agency and is designed to provide a range of accredited experiences, such as the Youth Award Scheme and the Duke of Edinburgh Award.
26. The school day is organised into eight 35-minute periods, although most students experience four 70-minute lessons each day. This arrangement creates imbalances in the allocation of time to subjects and, in some cases, such as religious education and physical education, limits the standards achieved. The school's overall teaching time is less than that recommended and less than that of most schools nationally. This restricts the breadth of the curriculum. The school is aware of the issues and a review of the structure of the day and length of teaching time is being undertaken.
27. Provision for PSHE is very good. There is a comprehensive programme of study that includes bullying, the enhancement of self-esteem, study skill acquisition and rights and responsibilities. Health education topics such as alcohol, drug and sex education are effectively taught both in tutorial time and on annual focus days. These focus days involve specialist outside speakers and are valued by students.
28. Accommodation is adequate overall to meet the demands of the curriculum but has some weaknesses that affect learning. This is particularly true in physical education, where proposals for a sports hall to remedy the deficiency are moving ahead, but also in drama and to a lesser extent in art and design. Since the last inspection, science laboratories have been refurbished and now meet minimum requirements but some classes are taught in non-specialist rooms, which places restrictions on teachers' planning of work. The school makes the best use of its accommodation and has recently redecorated a number of classrooms, but some less stimulating areas remain, such as in history. Accommodation for French, music, and religious education is good. For students with special educational needs, it is very good. Display areas in classrooms and around the school are fresh and attractive, and celebrate students' achievements.
29. The library is attractive, very user friendly and well used by students, notably in Years 7 to 9. It is well managed by an enthusiastic librarian and open to students during lunch break and after lessons. There is a clear vision for developing this valuable resource, which is currently limited in terms of non-fiction for students in Years 10 and 11 and the range of ICT hardware and software. It provides good support to students with special educational needs and those who are gifted and talented.
30. All departments are at least adequately resourced and in English, mathematics, music and religious education, the resources are now good. There is good access to ICT in English, history, design and technology, and music. In design and technology, the ICT suite is exciting, but the number of computers do not always match the group sizes. The school has a small number of interactive whiteboards, which are used well to extend teaching and learning styles and are effective in helping students to understand processes. In mathematics and French, ICT access is limited.

Care, guidance and support

The school takes very good care of its students. The provision of support, advice and guidance based on monitoring is excellent. Systems to involve students through seeking, valuing and acting on their views are very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The excellent pastoral system ensures that students have trusting relationships with many adults in the school.
- Excellent arrangements are made for the transition from primary schools.
- Students receive excellent support and guidance from tutors who are well informed with assessment data to help monitor their progress.
- Guidance on further study and careers is excellent.
- Procedures are not all sufficiently formalised to reflect the high level of student care and attention to health and safety that actually takes place.

Commentary

31. The school follows local education authority procedures for child protection and ensures that all staff are aware of requirements and the school's procedures. The child protection officer is identified to staff during the induction process. Whilst procedures are well known to staff, there is not a formal written link through the staff handbook to the local education authority procedures. The school works well with external agencies and has systems in place to support children who are in the care of the local authority. It follows up absence on the first day to ensure the safety and welfare of the students and this is also leading to improved attendance figures.
32. The school follows local education authority health and safety procedures and carries out regular inspections. The health and safety policy has, however, not been reviewed for several years and does not fully reflect the actual attention given to health and safety. Whilst governors receive copies of the annual inspection report, they are not directly involved in the process. There is very good welfare provision from caring pastoral staff and support staff. Medical provision is provided through adequately trained first aid staff who have access to an area where treatment can be carried out.
33. The school has a very well structured pastoral system where tutors know the students very well and have very good information about their academic progress to enable them to give well-informed guidance. In addition to the morning tutor period, all students have the regular opportunity for detailed discussion on an individual basis during their review days. Assessment data is very well used on these occasions to set realistic but challenging targets. The dedication of the staff and the high quality relationships within the school facilitate regular informal opportunities for guidance and support. The provision of PSHE is made in specific periods each week and delivered by the class tutors. This, together with the twice-daily contact at registration, enables excellent relationships to be developed between teachers and students.
34. Students with special educational needs are given very good support by the special needs co-ordinator and by learning support assistants who monitor their progress carefully. Those students with statements of special educational need have very good relationships with their attached learning support assistant. Learning mentors play an important role in supporting students who have particular behavioural and other difficulties that affect their work. Technicians also support students well in subjects like design and technology and ICT.
35. The school has very strong links with the main feeder primary schools and with the parents of students even before they join the school. Students are all visited at their primary school and have good opportunities to visit the secondary school during Year 6 as part of an excellent induction process. Advice on courses and careers is exceptionally good with all students having access to an individual interview with an external advisor as well as to very good resources in the careers section of the library. Guidance on further education and careers is also provided as part of the PSHE course.

36. Students have good opportunities to express their views about the school through the year and school councils, and the school is clearly committed to listening to these views and responding. The councils are now sufficiently well developed that students could be given more ownership of them with less teacher leadership.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has excellent links with parents, the community and other educational establishments.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The strong partnership with parents ensures that they receive excellent information and are able to support their sons' learning.
- Excellent partnerships with other local schools and the community make a significant contribution to learning.
- The Family Unit and the Community Inclusion Unit help overcome barriers to learning.

Commentary

37. Parents are very supportive of the school and no general issues of concern were identified. Isolated issues, raised in the parents' meeting or in the questionnaires, were considered during the inspection and contribute to the findings in this report.
38. The reports to parents about students' progress comprise excellent written information in the form of review records and the record of achievement report, as well as oral information at parents' evenings and whenever requested by the parents. Students' targets are identified and the progress towards them is clearly explained. This sets the agenda for discussions with students and parents at the review days. Parents also receive a good quality prospectus and a governors' annual report for the school, together with informative well-produced newsletters. The parents of new students also receive a booklet about school procedures, including the 'open door' policy, which enables them to arrange to see staff when they need to. Attendance at parents' evenings and events is good. The school uses a planner for students to allow parents to monitor the work and to communicate with the school and these are exceptionally well used by both staff and parents. There is a strong and effective parent teacher friends association, which raises funds and holds social functions.

Example of outstanding practice

The school has worked with other schools to create effective partnerships to support families and facilitate students' learning.

The excellent partnerships with the nearby girls' school and the two main feeder primary schools, are based on the recognition that the four schools are involved with many of the same families. Through the appointment of a Parent Link Worker and a Community Education Officer, the school has created excellent links with parents. There is the provision of many in-school courses, for example, on numeracy skills and parenting skills, which have attracted almost 700 parents from the four schools over an 18-month period. The creation of the Family Unit, based on the school campus, which involves external agencies whose officers support all four schools, enables families to be supported throughout their child's education. The Community Inclusion Unit, also based on the school campus, is used by all the schools, not only to provide the support students need to overcome their difficulties, but also to provide continuity of provision for these students.

39. The school has excellent links with primary schools, especially the main feeder ones. There are both curriculum links and pastoral links, with excellent liaison between the head of Year 7 and the primary schools, which is well supported by other staff and by visits and documentation. Links with post-16 establishments are equally good with students given information about all available options through visits and representatives visiting the school. A significant strength of the school is its involvement in

the South West Area Network (SWAN) of secondary schools, of which the headteacher is chair. This provides professional support for staff and the sharing of resources, which is proving to be of significant benefit during current staff absence due to illness.

40. Students benefit from the excellent links with the community in a wide variety of ways. In addition to links through the Family Unit provision, students benefit from many visits into the community and visitors from the community. The school is a significant and integral part of the community. Particular contributions are provided in music and sport. An example of experiences available to students was when students were invited to participate in a national radio programme in which they represented the school extremely well. As a specialist technology college, strong links have been established with organisations in the area for their mutual benefit.
41. There has been good improvement in establishing partnerships since the last inspection.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are very good. The school is very effectively managed and the governance of the school is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The leadership of the headteacher and key staff is excellent.
- The management of the school by senior staff and heads of subject is very good.
- The school's procedures for monitoring its own performance are very good.
- Strategic planning to take the school forward is very good.
- There are very good arrangements for staff development.
- Procedures for ensuring that all students are well catered for are excellent.
- The review of policies and procedures by governors and senior managers is not sufficiently rigorous nor is the planning for improvement in the accommodation.

Commentary

42. Since the last inspection, the school has made very good progress through the highly perceptive and determined leadership of the headteacher, whose vision and refusal to accept that the school cannot improve permeate every level of the school's operation. Aably supported by his leadership team, he has brought about a culture of high aspirations and the determination to improve throughout the school. All members of the school community are valued and included, and there is a vibrant corporate spirit which is shared by staff and students alike. The commitment of staff is seen in the outstanding efforts that have been made to minimise the impact on students of the very difficult period of protracted staff absence which the school is currently experiencing.

Example of outstanding practice

Outstanding leadership bringing about school improvement.

The leadership of the headteacher has been highly effective in bringing about improvement. He has focused on three main elements: the quality of teaching and learning; high levels of staff development in order to raise the sights of teachers as to what can be achieved; and a management structure which is unified in its vision for the school. Over a period of time, appointments to leadership posts have been carefully made to ensure that a team of like-minded professionals has been established. The judicious use of external funding such as Excellence in Cities and the

Leadership Improvement Grant has played an important role in bringing about needed structural changes. Excellent use has been made of performance management procedures and a highly structured professional development plan in order to ensure that staff share the same vision. In this, the school's use of the local network of schools which pool their resources to mount quality training events and share expertise has been very effective. The result has been a teaching body whose aspirations for the school and its students are very high and a student body which is committed and achieves very well.

43. Governors have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and their contribution has improved well since the last inspection. The excellent leadership within the school has somewhat limited the opportunities and need for governors to challenge but they have provided good monitoring and support. Governors work well through three sub committees to help shape the vision and direction of the school and receive comprehensive reports from the school to facilitate this. Both the main committee and the sub committees are well led by enthusiastic and dedicated governors. Whilst statutory requirements are met (with the exception of that for collective worship), the governors are not sufficiently pro-active in ensuring this. Agreeing and reviewing policy documents is insufficiently formalised. Governors receive and discuss health and safety reports but are not sufficiently involved in issues about the buildings. They have no formal long-term plan for improving the buildings to meet the needs of the curriculum.
44. The school is very well managed and runs very smoothly on a daily basis. The senior leadership team are using assessment as a key factor in moving the school forward. There is a very clear process in place to set challenging targets based on the careful analysis of information. This information informs the discussions between the leadership team and heads of department and forms the basis for discussions about teaching strategies. As a result of these discussions, development plans are drawn up and appropriate targets set.
45. The school's overall development strategy focuses well on the clear vision of improvement through developing high quality teaching and learning geared precisely to the needs of all students. The leadership and management of subject departments are very good, and in some cases, outstanding. Leaders share in the school's ethos and possess the vision and determination to take their subject forward. High standards of teaching and learning are central to the aims of all departments, and a major part of their planning and activity is concentrated on how these can be developed further. As a result, standards are rising year on year.
46. The school makes very effective use of the performance management procedures, which are very well established. The continuing professional development of teachers is very effective in raising staff confidence and vision, and in ensuring that teachers are up-to-date and able to provide the best for their students. Excellent use is made of the very active local network of schools as well as of national training providers to ensure that staff training is effective and has the desired impact on school improvement.
47. The administration of the school is very good. Teachers are given good support from a dedicated team of office support staff and the school runs smoothly. Finances are well managed and effective use is made of specific grant funding. Best value principles are built into the management of the school. The school gives very good value for money.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	2,629,823	Balance from previous year	41,654

Total expenditure	2,601,099
Expenditure per pupil	3,906

Balance carried forward to the next	70,378
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PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching has led to rising standards and very high achievement.
- Strong leadership has created a committed team who have done everything possible to mitigate the effects of staff absences.
- Strategies to improve boys' writing have been very successful.
- The monitoring of teaching, including marking, is not sufficiently strong.

Commentary

48. Standards in Years 7 to 9 are above average. Results in 2003, reflecting a rising trend since 1999, were above average for all schools and well above those for similar schools. The proportion of students gaining high levels was notably well above average. This represents very good achievement since students enter the school with only average standards. Much of their success is due to the thorough embedding of the principles of the National Literacy Strategy in teachers' practice. Students are articulate, often willing to talk at length. Many produce interesting, varied and often witty original writing. Whilst most respond to literature sensitively, there is little evidence of the development of personal reading.
49. Standards in Years 10 and 11 are also above average. GCSE English results in 2003 were below average for all students, but above that for boys and with a higher than average proportion of A* grades. GCSE English literature results were just below average, but well above the average for boys. The clear improvement since 1999 is particularly marked in English literature. Achievement is good: it is better in Year 10 than in Year 11, where some students have felt the impact of staffing changes. Students' writing is often vigorous, with perceptive insights and considerable analytical skills. Many write personal narratives that engage the reader's interest. Some in lower groups are reluctant to explore ideas in depth in their writing, although willing to do so orally.
50. Very good achievement in the school as a whole stems from well-structured teaching, assessment practices that show students what to do to succeed, and the successful introduction of measures to improve boys' writing. Students are thoroughly prepared for tests and examinations. They expect to work hard: their positive attitudes reflect the ethos of success that permeates the department. Students with special educational needs receive good support and achieve well because of their teachers' inclusive approach.
51. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers' high expectations inspire confidence and result in challenging work. The brisk pace and good classroom management in most lessons mean that behaviour is good and students' attention does not flag. In the best lessons, the teacher is an effective, dynamic presence and skilled questioning, together with friendly classroom relationships, result in very good learning. When lessons are less successful, it is often because the work is not fully matched to the students' different learning needs.
52. Leadership is very good. The head of department is an excellent role model, leading by example and enthusiasm. She has been very effective in creating a committed team of teachers, and in providing support for colleagues. Management is good. The management of the difficulties created by unfortunate staff absences has been exemplary: everything possible has been done to minimise the

effect on students' learning. Departmental plans correctly recognise that schemes of work for students with special educational needs still need further development. Monitoring is not sufficiently rigorous to ensure consistent standards of marking nor does it include adequate direct observation of classroom practice.

53. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good. More challenging teaching, standards that have risen from below to above average, the successful introduction of national initiatives, and the department's high profile in the local region for work on the development of boys' writing, have all been achieved despite the prolonged absences of key members of staff.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

54. Standards of literacy are above average, enabling students to achieve well in most subjects. An effective, consistent whole-school approach to the promotion of literacy, with strong contributions from many departments, has undoubtedly contributed to these improved standards. Students have many opportunities for speaking and listening, they read texts competently, demonstrate a good knowledge of subject terminology and write in a variety of forms. Good support to develop extended writing is seen particularly in English, geography and religious education. Progress Units are used to help students with weaknesses in literacy but their use is not adequately monitored and evaluated.

FRENCH

Provision in French is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is overall very good.
- Students achieve very well, and their performance at age 14 and in GCSE examinations is well above average.
- Students have extremely good attitudes towards language learning.
- The department is very well led and effectively managed.
- Standards in speaking are not as well developed as other skills.
- The use of ICT to support learning is at present not as consistent as it might be.

Commentary

55. Standards reached by students at age 14 are well above average. In GCSE, the proportion of students achieving grades A* to C has almost doubled in three years. In 2003, the proportion of students gaining A* to C grades was well above average for all students and very high compared with the average for boys. Lower attainers at age 16 take the certificate of achievement tests and the majority achieve higher grades.
56. In the work seen during the inspection, the attainment of older students is above average. Reading and writing skills are in many cases well above average, and some students are developing good speaking skills prior to their GCSE examinations. Most students in Year 9 reach good and often very good standards because the expectations of the teachers are high. For most students, speaking is the least well developed of the language skills.
57. All students reach at least the standards expected of them throughout the school, and many reach standards which are well above expectation. Some lower attainers and students with statements of special educational need achieve very well. Written work is extremely well presented; the product of high teacher expectations. Students' attitudes and behaviour in modern foreign languages lessons are almost always very good.
58. Practically all the teaching seen in French was good or very good. Lessons are well-planned and proceed at a brisk pace. Teachers use innovative and interesting strategies to sustain

interest and to help students learn. However, intensive language speaking practice as an integral part of every lesson is often too limited and does not allow for the development of confidence in speaking. Facilities for ICT are no longer adequate and this has a negative effect on learning.

59. The leadership in French is very good. Teachers work well as a team and there are very good procedures for sharing expertise and discussing teaching and learning strategies, and a clear determination to drive up standards. All members of the department share the school's culture for improvement. The department is well managed. The department analyses its own performance well and takes action to improve in areas where it feels it could do better. Good improvement has been made since the last inspection, although speaking skills still need to be developed further.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The implementation of the numeracy strategy is having a major impact on the raising of standards.
- Student performance in Year 9 National Curriculum tests for 2003 was very good.
- The head of department provides very good leadership with a clear vision to raise standards.
- There is a whole team commitment to the raising of standards.
- The extensive and innovative range of teaching strategies employed is a clear strength of the department.
- There is insufficient use of ICT in the teaching of mathematics.

Commentary

60. Very good leadership and highly effective teaching have contributed to a significant improvement in performance since the last inspection. In work seen during the inspection, student attainment by the end of Year 9 is well above national expectations and well above average when compared with that of students having similar prior attainment levels. Standards attained in National Curriculum tests in 2003 were above the national average and well above the average when compared with standards in similar schools. The upward trend in results is above that recorded nationally and reflects both the outstanding commitment and the very good teaching skills within the department.
61. The percentage of students obtaining a GCSE grade A* to C in 2002 was below the national average, although the percentage of students obtaining a grade A* to G was above average. In work seen during the inspection, student attainment by Year 11 is in line with national expectations and achievement is good when prior attainment levels are taken into account.
62. The teaching of mathematics is very good and results in highly effective learning by the students. The department has enthusiastically embraced the implementation of the numeracy strategy and this is having a major influence on the raising of standards. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed and, particularly in Years 7,8 and 9, teaching was often very good or excellent. Lesson planning is thorough; a wide range of teaching strategies is employed and explicit learning objectives are shared with students.
63. Teachers have high expectations and demonstrate good classroom management skills, as a result of which students behave very well and acquire new skills and knowledge. Working relationships between students and teachers are very good and are built upon trust, respect and good humour. Very good and sometimes inspirational classroom displays raise the spirits and contribute to effective learning.
64. In the very best lessons, students are highly motivated by the enthusiasm of their teachers and are set challenging work that is suited to their needs and abilities; there is very good co-operation when

students work in groups and there are also good opportunities provided for independent learning. Teachers are aware of individual education plans that are provided for students with special educational needs and good practice exists in the use of support staff. Students of all abilities and across all year groups are able to access a range of enrichment activities and are very positive in their attitude towards mathematics. Resource constraints have resulted in there being insufficient use of ICT, although an interactive whiteboard has been purchased and there are plans for further development.

65. Leadership of the department is very good. The head of department recognises the issues that need to be resolved and is an inspirational role model for her colleagues. She has raised expectations and is well supported by a team of well-qualified, very effective teachers. Management of the department is good. The departmental handbook is helpful and contains policies and guidance for good teaching; the introduction of the numeracy strategy, for example, has been very effective. An assessment database has been established and there is good tracking of students' progress towards targets based on prior attainment. The marking of students' work is regular and students are aware of the levels at which they are working. Students receive considerable encouragement from their teachers, although the use of written subject-specific guidance for future improvement has not been fully developed.

Mathematics across the curriculum

66. The school has given high priority to the raising of standards in numeracy and considerable improvements have been made since the last inspection. A numeracy co-ordinator with considerable experience in primary education is having a major impact in raising standards. He has led whole-school training sessions for colleagues and issued a booklet on the teaching of numeracy to each member of staff. Numeracy days for students in Years 7 and 8 have been enthusiastically received and parents and students have enjoyed attending family numeracy sessions.
67. The numeracy co-ordinator attends Heads of Department meetings and identifies areas for further development. The mathematics scheme of work has been amended where possible so as to ensure that topics are delivered at the optimum time.
68. Students are applying their numeracy skills well in most subject areas. For example, in design and technology, students produce accurate scale drawings prior to making three-dimensional models, in science, they present and interpret data, and in PE, they understand angles of trajectory and estimate speeds, distances and times.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching, identified by good planning, the effective use of time and challenging objectives, engages students well and sets high expectations.
- Effective use of assessment to inform planning and to set challenging targets that students understand is well established.
- Leadership is very good, providing a clear vision for the department.
- Variability in the implementation of the marking policy results in inconsistency in providing informative feedback to students.
- Inadequate accommodation results in too many lessons being taught in inappropriate rooms.

Commentary

69. Standards achieved in science are above average at Years 9 and 11. Results in national tests in Year 9 are above national averages and show a consistently improving picture. GCSE and GNVQ combined results in 2003 were above average and show an upward trend for the last five years. Students' understanding and knowledge and use of scientific terminology, together with positive attitudes towards learning, are good. Practical skills are developing well

and students are able to observe and record information with accuracy and care. Their skills of analysing and interpreting information are also developing well. They take pride in their work. In Years 10 and 11, too few examples of extended writing and designing practical work to test out hypotheses were seen. This results in students on occasions being too passive in lessons. Achievement in lessons and the standards seen in students' work confirms that they are making good progress, in particular, those students who have very good additional support. The provision of enrichment activities for the most able students enhances their experience and contributes well to their good progress.

70. Teaching and learning are good and sometimes very good. Where teaching is most effective, it is illustrated by well-focused plans, appropriate pace and activities designed to support learning well. This results in students being engaged with the lesson content as tasks interest them and they are able to apply prior learning to new subject material very well. Students are confident in their use of scientific vocabulary and the effective use of a range of questioning styles enables them to make contributions to their lessons. More-able students in particular are challenged to give reasoned arguments for their answers and to apply prior learning to a range of problems. Relationships between teachers and students are good so that students behave well and concentrate on their work. The marking of students' work is sometimes inconsistent. Brief comments praise good work, but too few examples of guidance on how to improve their work and attain their target grades are evident.
71. Leadership of the department is very good and management is good. The new head of department has had a very positive impact on the work of the department. He has a clear vision, clearly articulates what he wants to achieve and has identified clear strategies to achieve them. Day to day organisation is effective. Systems are in place to monitor the quality of teaching and learning. Accommodation is unsatisfactory despite some refurbishment. The teaching of science in non-specialist rooms is unsatisfactory and limits opportunities for learning. Progress since the previous inspection is good.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in information and communication technology is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good and students achieve well.
- The department is very well led and well managed.
- Although computer provision is above average, the needs of all subjects are not yet fully met.

Commentary

72. On entry, students' standards in ICT are in line with national expectations. Currently, there is only a taught course in Year 7 and students achieve well during this, quickly improving to above average standards. Students are able to use software to carry out tasks, when for example, creating a football programme. Many show good independence when choosing styles and appropriate content. In Years 10 and 11, those students who go on to take the examination course also achieve well, reinforcing their above average standards, with the great majority gaining a GNVQ qualification. The coursework of Year 11 students shows that most have succeeded well in designing an appropriate system to help a business customer organise stock. Many are able to include good testing systems and on-line help facilities in order to reach merit levels.
73. Teaching and learning are generally good on the taught courses and they are sometimes very good. Teachers' high expectations effectively motivate students to work with commitment, use and share equipment responsibly and respect the views of others. They make good use of projectors and large screens to provide informative explanations and demonstrations, so that students have strong guidance on how to achieve well in their tasks. Teachers use the setting system well to plan appropriate work to

help meet students' differing needs. In most lessons, technical support assistants strongly enhance this by helping teachers to give individual support. On the GNVQ course, marking and individual guidance to students are particularly helpful to their achievement. In some lessons, teachers do not give students enough opportunities to reflect upon their work. Although the management of students is generally good, it is occasionally less so, when teachers do not ensure that all pay full attention to demonstrations, allowing some students to continue with their own work, so that they miss important points.

74. The very good leadership of ICT is expressed in the vision for the role of ICT in the school and the commitment for improvement at both departmental and whole-school levels. Since the last inspection, the ICT curriculum has been significantly improved, with a move from GCSE to GNVQ transforming a situation in which results had slipped to well below average to one where the great majority are successful. The Years 7 to 9 curriculum is also being improved with the progressive introduction of taught courses to provide a solid skills foundation when using computers in the other subjects. Teaching and achievement, which were satisfactory, are now both better.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

75. The commitment to ICT has secured better than average provision of resources, but a high level of demand upon these from the taught courses and many subject departments means that several subjects, including mathematics, geography and physical education, often find it difficult to gain access to resources. Although French does have some computers of its own, many are unserviceable. The English department is making good use of its resources, including an interactive whiteboard and the school's intranet. Science is beginning to build good resources, including laptop computers with wireless Internet connection. These are making an effective contribution to achievement when, for example, students use computers to take measurements during investigations. Design and technology is making a very good contribution, particularly in the use of computers for design and to control devices. Excellent specialist resources are being used in an outstanding manner by the music department, to enhance performance in that subject. Overall, when students use computers in other subjects, their ICT capability is above average.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is strongly supported by very good assessment procedures, particularly in Years 7 to 9, although marking is not always consistent.
- Students receive effective help to improve their literacy skills, but fewer opportunities for using ICT.
- Very good leadership and good management have secured good improvement.

Commentary

76. Standards on entry for the current Year 9 and Year 11 students were below average. In raising these to expected levels by Year 9 and maintaining the improvement to Year 11, all students achieve well. By Year 9, students know how the population is distributed around the world and understand why its density varies from place to place. They can use statistical data to calculate and compare population trends in different places. Year 11 students understand how human activities can affect the environment when, for example, explaining the causes of water pollution. Most learn how to give precise information such as compass bearings and map references when describing places.

77. GCSE results were average in 2003. Success at the highest grades was below average, but all gained at least a G grade. Students generally achieved lower results than in their other subjects, indicating that many did not fully reach their potential in the examination.
78. Teaching and learning are good and sometimes very good. Teachers effectively ensure that all students achieve as well as they are able by matching work well to their needs, as reflected in the differing ability sets. They are aware that many students have difficulties in expressing what they know in writing and provide good support for this. In the GCSE course, teaching shows good awareness that students need help in their examination techniques, providing opportunities to practise and discuss written answers. Students benefit from strong guidance on how well they are doing and how to improve, and are encouraged to identify and evaluate their own targets. However, although marking is generally good, teachers do not always monitor work to ensure that it is finished, which sometimes reduces achievement. Sometimes, individual students do not fully benefit from good opportunities to discuss work in small groups, when teachers do not ensure that they are fully involved. Although teachers are committed to the use of ICT, plans are not fully implemented as it is difficult to secure access to computers for all classes. As a result, the benefits computers could bring to pupils' learning are not realised.
79. Leadership is characterised by a strong commitment to improving the performance of the subject. It has succeeded in making good progress since the last inspection, with achievement and teaching both better than they were then. An important element in this has been a strengthening in the quality of support given to non-specialist teachers, through training, monitoring and guidance. However, the high proportion of teaching by non-specialists makes it difficult for the subject to further improve its performance.

History

Provision in history is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very high quality teaching is supported by exemplary planning and the thoughtful use of excellent resources.
- Excellent relationships between staff and students, based on trust and respect, encourage students to speak confidently.
- The purposeful leadership and management of the new head of department have brought renewed vision and direction to the subject.
- Students are given insufficient opportunity to write imaginatively about the past.

Commentary

80. Standards of work are above average at the end of Year 9 and Year 11. Students in Years 7 to 9 develop historical skills, write accurately and speak with assurance. Although GCSE results in 2003 were below the national average for boys, work seen during the inspection clearly indicates that students in Years 10 and 11 are working at a level above average, significantly so in Year 10. Achievement is very good in both key stages. Students progress very well, both within individual lessons and over time. They acquire key historical skills such as understanding and explaining change, evaluating evidence and detecting bias.
81. Teaching and learning are very good throughout the school. Lessons are extremely well planned and challenging. The pace is always lively with a range of varied and interesting activities keeping the students on task and behaving well. However, a few lessons would benefit from a slightly slower pace with greater time for reflection by students. Teachers have high expectations. They use colourful and fascinating source materials (about London in the Great Plague, for example) produced in school, which enthuse and challenge students. The needs of students with special educational needs and the gifted and talented are met with a range of differentiated tasks and extension materials. Students write

clearly and accurately in completing a variety of tasks from short notes to extended essays. They do not have enough opportunity, however, to develop empathy by writing imaginatively about people, places and events in history. Assessment of students' work is very good. Teachers ensure that students know what level they are working at and aiming for and what they must do to reach it. Whilst some marking earlier in the year was rather cursory, this improved after the new head of department addressed the issue. Students use the Internet for research and plans exist for an increased role for ICT as resources allow.

Example of outstanding practice

Year 8 lesson on how people in London reacted to the great plague.

Gruesome mortality lists from seventeenth century London, which captured students' attention before they had even sat down, were the focus for a lively starter session. In the main part of the lesson, students were asked to analyse and evaluate different contemporary evidence on the plague. The colourful in-house sources, both pictorial and written, were superbly presented. The class teacher moved round, challenging and supporting, creating a purposeful atmosphere and ensuring all students were engaged throughout. His sensitive support for students with special educational needs was particularly noteworthy whilst effective extension materials were available for more able students. Rapid question and answer sessions, involving the whole class, reinforced the work done in groups and pairs. The lesson concluded with an appropriate written activity in which students wrote to the king asking him to return to London to organise the authorities' response to the epidemic. They were asked to research the topic further on the internet for homework. Throughout, students were encouraged to think deeply about historical evidence and its uses. Students enjoyed the subject, understood why work had been set and found it rewarding and worthwhile.

82. Leadership and management of the department are very good. The head of department, only in post for two terms, is ensuring history is both enjoyable and challenging for students. Revised departmental documentation is exemplary. The department is planning an impressive range of educational visits, including to Berlin. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Previous high standards have been maintained. Teaching has improved, as has provision for students with special educational needs.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards at Year 9 are above expectations.
- Stimulating teaching is promoting very good learning, using a wide variety of resources and placing an emphasis on pupil involvement.
- All students in Years 10 and 11 study the short course and a significant minority study both the short and the full courses.
- Leadership and management are very good.
- There are some missed opportunities for independent research on religious beliefs.
- Insufficient time in Years 10 and 11 for students studying the short course GCSE limits their attainment.

Commentary

83. Teacher assessment in 2003 and in work and lessons seen showed that standards at age 14 are above the expectations of the Locally Agreed Syllabus. Results in the GCSE full course were below the national average in 2003. Students' achievement across the school is good.
84. By Year 9, most students are developing a good understanding of prejudice and discrimination, looking at the beliefs of three different religions. Year 10 students are

developing the skills they will need at GCSE, in studying the effects of Christianity on behaviour, attitudes and lifestyle. Students in Year 11 show a maturity of approach in class discussion on moral issues such as those surrounding pre-marital sex. They appreciate religious and secular views and reach informed opinions of their own.

85. The standard of students' written work is good overall. However, students have not had enough practice at finding out information for themselves and using it in lessons. Well focused planning enables the effective delivery of the Locally Agreed Syllabus. However, there is insufficient curriculum time for the department to raise standards for all students in Years 10 and 11; consequently, less than half of Year 11 students have been entered for this year's short course examination. Standards in the present Year 11 full GCSE course are above average and in the short course, average.
86. Teaching and learning are very good overall and excellent in two lessons seen. The atmosphere in lessons is most conducive to learning, based on respect and a sense of purpose. Teachers make very good use of a range of resources and activities to engage students in learning, for example, in Year 7, lessons on Judaism involved the use of artefacts and video clips. A variety of discussion techniques are employed most effectively, ensuring that starter activities provide students with the factual basis for informed discussion. Regular assessment at the end of each half-term unit of work is improving standards. Teachers encourage the use of ICT on assignments but there are missed opportunities for its use in lessons. Teachers are excellent role models for the subject, raising its status in the eyes of their students. Students' attitudes are excellent in all lessons and work seen.
87. The head of department is providing very good leadership, identifying areas for development by regularly revisiting the curriculum to improve the performance of all groups of students. The subject is very well managed and resourced. Much has improved since the previous inspection, when insufficient time was devoted to the subject in Years 10 and 11. Now, statutory requirements for the subject are being met in full and standards have risen from below to above average in Year 9 and standards in Year 11 are improving.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

Provision in design and technology is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership is very good and provides a clear vision for the continual development of the subject.
- Standards in graphic products are well above average and indicate very good achievement in Years 10 and 11.
- Good teaching and students' very good attitudes to work promote good learning.
- Progress in developing sketching as an aspect of designing, as noted in the department development plan, should be reviewed.

Commentary

88. Students join the school with standards that are at best similar to the national average. Their practical skills and appreciation of the principles of designing are limited. By the end of Year 9, results have remained consistently above national averages. This is reflected in the standard of work seen in lessons and the good progress made. Students' making skills are often good compared to aspects of designing, such as sketching, which are less well developed.

89. GCSE results for all subjects, taken as a whole, have risen significantly over the past five years. In 2003, at the higher grades A*-C, results were above and well above the school and national averages respectively. In 2003, there was a mixed pattern of results across each of the subjects. In graphic products, they were well above average and in resistant materials they were average. There was considerable improvement in the number of students who achieved a pass in GNVQ manufacturing compared to 2002. In catering, the results, although below average, showed good achievement for that group of generally lower ability students. Standards are variable in the work seen in Years 10 and 11 and there is a marked improvement as students move through this key stage. More-able students consolidate skill acquisition through good research, organisation and evaluation, and produce coursework folders of a very high standard, as seen in work in graphic products, where students design and model a package for a fast food outlet using computer-aided-design and manufacture effectively. The high level of individual support and guidance and opportunities to continue work beyond lessons are all contributory factors to the overall good progress being made by students. For example, a group of gifted and talented students gained central England success in the national Formula 1 Challenge competition for their racing car design and manufacture.
90. Teaching is good overall and occasionally very good. It is variable across subjects, notably in Years 10 and 11. The most effective teaching makes a positive contribution to the standards achieved. In these lessons, teachers plan and set realistic but challenging tasks, manage the students well, insist on very good behaviour and work energetically to help them make good progress. The one lesson where teaching was only satisfactory had some good features, but the teacher was over directive. The focus for the lesson was directed towards the outcome and similar work was repeated at the expense of developing learning to the depth and breadth expected. The increasingly good use of assessment to set targets and to show students how to improve is beginning to impact positively on standards.
91. Leadership is very good, educational direction is clear and focused. Management is good and the head of department is well supported by a team of specialist teachers. Links with primary schools and industry are good - for example, in developing students' understanding of managing materials and batch production within the Rover Group. Accommodation and resources are satisfactory but furniture and fittings are showing signs of wear since the school received Technology College status. Continuity is hampered by rooms being sited on different floors and the lack of ICT resources are a limiting factor for some of the larger groups of students. Software used for computer-aided-manufacture is dated but deficiencies are somewhat overcome through good links with the Local Education Authority's resource centre. Good improvement has been made since the last inspection and this was recognised in 2002 when the school received the Specialist Schools Trust 'Susan Fey Award' for most improved GCSE results.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

Art and design were inspected in full and drama and media studies were sampled.

Provision in art is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Work is well planned and structured so that students build on previous learning.
- High standards have been maintained since the previous inspection.

- Positive attitudes to learning at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4.
- The use of assessment data to inform lesson planning and target setting is improving.
- Inadequate use is made of ICT as a tool for design and drawing.
- Sketchbooks are not used for investigation, research and the development of techniques.

Commentary

92. Students enter the school with standards in art that are broadly average. By the end of Year 9, they have made good gains in knowledge, skills and understanding of the subject. The ability to use line, tone and texture effectively in their drawings is evident. Observational drawing and design processes are well developed. Students show a strong interest in the subject and accept challenge readily. A Year 9 class using pencil and paint to portray moods and emotions based on the work of Turner made good progress. In 2003, GCSE results at grades A* -C were above average for all students and well above average for boys. This has been maintained relatively steadily over recent years. Students learn well and their achievements are good due to the enthusiasm and good preparation of teachers. Lower attaining students achieve well, thanks to the support they receive from teachers and learning assistants. Students from minority ethnic groups are fully integrated and are making good progress in line with others.
93. Clear teaching and learning objectives are shared with the students. Teachers have a good knowledge of the subject and lessons are well planned. Teachers have high expectations and form strong relationships with the students based on mutual respect. A good range of resources are used to encourage learning. A Year 7 class produced drawings and paintings of above average standards, working from paper plates and cakes, after looking at the work of a Pop artist. Teachers make good use of starter activities, plenaries, self-assessment and key words. Students are encouraged to make judgements on their own work and on the work of others in the group. Questioning is very good and it makes students think and learn. Homework is regularly set and marked, linked with class work. There are good displays of work in all classrooms and around the school, including examples of attainment objectives for GCSE.
94. In spite of the long absence of the head of department, the senior management has managed the temporary staffing well. The guidance given by the head of department prior to his absence has enabled the acting head of department to keep students on course. There is evidence in the development plans, schemes of work and students' work that the issues from the previous inspection have been addressed but there is still further work to be done on the use of ICT and of sketchbooks for preparatory work, in order to enhance learning.

Drama

95. Two lessons were sampled. Teaching ranged from very good to satisfactory. Both lessons were part of the English curriculum. There is no specialist drama department and, as a result, standards overall are below national expectations in Years 7 to 9. Students have no consistent experience of the subject. GCSE drama is taught as an after-school option to a small group consisting mainly of students from Years 8 and 9. This arrangement offers gifted and talented students the chance to gain an early GCSE qualification, and to develop their own interests. Results in 2003 were very good, with all students gaining grades A*-C, and a very high proportion achieving the top grades A* and As.

Media studies

96. One Year 10 lesson was sampled. Students develop sound analytical skills and achieve well, mainly because they are challenged and engaged by the teacher's subject expertise and enthusiasm. Results in GCSE communication studies have been well above average for the past two years.

Music

Provision in music is **excellent**.

- Standards are above expectation at Year 9.
- Students are achieving well overall in response to very good quality teaching.
- Leadership, management and assessment systems are excellent.
- Curriculum planning meets the needs of all students.
- Resources, including ICT, are excellent.
- There are excellent opportunities for enrichment in all years.

Commentary

97. Standards achieved at Year 9, based on teacher assessments and on lessons and work seen, are above average. A significant minority of students in all years are working at high levels in playing and performing. There is no significant difference between the attainment of all groups of students. Results in the 2003 GCSE examinations were below average and have fluctuated since the previous report. There is evidence to show that many students who attain high standards in Year 9 do not opt for the GCSE music course. However, the majority of instrumentalists continue to receive tuition and standards are above average. The number of students entered early for GCSE music is increasing. Overall standards of work seen at Year 11 are above average.
98. By the end of Year 9, students have gained good skills in playing and performing; they use keyboards and computers well and many play their own instruments in lessons. This represents good achievement as many students have a limited knowledge, on entry, of the elements of music and little or no experience in playing instruments. By the end of Year 11, students' practical and composition skills are well developed. Listening skills are satisfactory and improving, as seen in one Year 11 revision lesson. Achievement is good.
99. The department is buzzing and a large proportion of students make full use of open access to excellent resources. A large number of students in all years play and perform in school and in the community. The school Steel Band is well known and in great demand in the community.
100. In all years, students benefit from teachers' excellent knowledge of the ways in which students learn, as seen in one Year 7 lesson on graphic scoring, where less-able students made rapid progress. A very good range of activities captures the interest and involvement of students of all levels of attainment. All groups of students have access to the music curriculum and their response was excellent in all the lessons seen. The department makes outstanding opportunities for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This was seen, for example, in one Year 9 lesson on composing in which images of war were used as a stimulus.

Example of outstanding practice

Outstanding planning for pupils with special educational needs in a Year 7 music lesson.

An outstanding Year 7 music lesson included students with special educational needs, all of whom made outstanding achievement in the lesson. They were extremely well catered for by a teacher who has excellent knowledge and understanding of National Curriculum requirements and ways in which pupils of different abilities learn. Tasks were very well matched to the needs of all students. In groups, students composed a graphic score, making full use of a wide range of percussion instruments. High quality explanation and demonstration by the teacher enabled students to explore various ways of using the instruments, showing an awareness of others in the group. Students were willing to perform and showed a sense of enjoyment and satisfaction in their work. They demonstrated an awareness of pitch, duration and dynamics and all were given the opportunity to evaluate their work and the work of others. During the lesson, it was evident that students had made rapid progress in composing, performing and ensemble playing.

101. Leadership and management are excellent. The head of department has a clear vision. Schemes of work are imaginative and thorough assessment systems and target setting enable students to have knowledge of their learning and how to improve. Since the previous inspection, the department has made very good progress. Standards are considerably higher and the quality of teaching is much improved. There has been an increase in the uptake for the GCSE course and the department is working hard to encourage students in Year 9 to further their studies by emphasising the wide range of career opportunities available in today's society.

Physical education

Provision in physical education is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is good in all year groups.
- Teaching in Years 7 to 11 is good, with many very good features.
- Provision and participation rates in extra-curricular activities are very good.
- Leadership and management of the department are very good.
- The limited accommodation and time allocation restrict students' attainment at the higher levels.

Commentary

102. Attainment on entry in Year 7 is below expectation; students make very good progress and achieve very well during Years 7 to 9. By the end of Year 9, standards are above the national expectation. At the end of Year 11, core physical education standards are in line with the national expectation. In Years 10 and 11, those who choose to take examination courses make good progress and standards are above national averages. Students with special educational needs are well catered for within accredited courses and achieve well.

103. Teaching and learning are good, with some very good features. All teaching staff have very good subject knowledge, lessons are very well planned and assessments are moderated. In Years 7 to 9, teaching is good; students are taught a challenging curriculum to secure skill acquisition. In core lessons in Years 10 and 11, teachers provide curriculum opportunities that develop students' motivation and personal development. Throughout examination courses, teaching is good, with some very good features; teachers provide innovative approaches that capture the students' imagination and engage them in active learning. Students work hard and are very productive in all aspects of coursework requirements.

104. The head of department provides very good leadership and is ably supported by the second in department in his management roles. This is a cohesive and effective team that inspires and motivates, and has a positive effect on students' learning. The head of department provides support for others in the school and the wider community through his role as an Advanced Skills Teacher. There is very good management of a wide, varied and comprehensive programme of extra-curricular activities.

105. The resources made available to the department are well managed. The standard of accommodation has been poorly maintained and is a barrier both to raising standards of attainment and the delivery in depth of a number of curriculum areas. Health and safety procedures within the department are managed well. However, poor maintenance of outside facilities raises ongoing safety concerns.

106. Very good improvement has been made since the last inspection. The department has introduced the Junior Sports Leadership Award. A well-managed system of monitoring and evaluation of learning and teaching is now in place that helps identify good practice and supports professional development.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship was inspected in full and PSHE was sampled.

Personal, social and health education

107. Two lessons were sampled. Teaching and learning are very good as a result of teachers' planning, skills in class management, encouragement of students and the use of good quality materials. The course makes a significant contribution to the school's success in producing mature and responsible young people.

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is very good as a result of good planning, teachers' subject knowledge, and their encouragement of students.
- The quality of debate in lessons is very high.
- The effectiveness of citizenship days is recognised by students.
- Assessment of the subject is insufficiently developed.
- No cross-curricular audit of citizenship has taken place and elements of citizenship in other lessons are often not identified as such to students.

Commentary

108. Citizenship is taught across the school. About 50 students at Key Stage 4 are also taking a short GCSE course in the subject. Standards of written work in citizenship for all are average in both key stages. However, spoken contributions are above average, often significantly so. Student achievement is good throughout and, by Year 11, students address complex political issues, revealing unusual maturity and knowledge.

109. In the short GCSE course, standards are average and achievement is good. Although the average academic ability of students on the course is not strong, they discuss topics such as reconciliation and conflict fluently, respecting each other's views and their teacher's. This year's cohort will be the first to take the examination.

110. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers have a good knowledge of the subject and their management of class discussion is impressive. Very effective lessons were observed on topics such as the role of the media in society, the penal system, environmental pollution and the state of democracy. All were characterised by a lively pace, clear objectives and students' participation. A key element in the course is the citizenship days held for each year group. These cover topics such as law and crime, local government and the world of work and involve a variety of visiting speakers, including the local Member of Parliament. Although these activities were not observed during the inspection, their value was clearly appreciated by students and a member of the local Youth Offending Team who took part. Although the school has plans to assess students at the end of key stages, in line with statutory requirements, these are insufficiently developed at the moment. Clearer guidance is required for class teachers to make secure judgements.

111. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The planning of citizenship days has been effective and citizenship is well integrated into tutorial time. No audit has been taken to see where aspects of citizenship appear across the curriculum. As a result, opportunities for reinforcement of learning are missed and teachers in other subjects rarely identify to students where aspects do appear in their lessons.

112. Provision is made for gifted and talented students through, for example, involvement in the Young Peoples' Parliament and attendance at the U.K. Earth Summit. Citizenship also plays a key role in the curriculum of the Inclusion Unit, which is run jointly by the four local schools.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

Inspection judgement

Grade

The overall effectiveness of the school	2
How inclusive the school is	1
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	2
Value for money provided by the school	2

Overall standards achieved	3
Students' achievement	3

Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	2
Attendance	2
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2
Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

The quality of education provided by the school	2
The quality of teaching	2
How well students learn	2
The quality of assessment	2
How well the curriculum meets students' needs	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	1
Accommodation and resources	4
Students' care, welfare, health and safety	2
Support, advice and guidance for students	1
How well the school seeks and acts on students' views	2
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	1
The quality of the school's links with the community	1
The school's links with other schools and colleges	1

The leadership and management of the school	2
The governance of the school	3
The leadership of the headteacher	1
The leadership of other key staff	1
The effectiveness of management	2

Inspectors make judgements on a scale: excellent (grade 1); very good (2); good (3); satisfactory (4); unsatisfactory (5); poor (6); very poor (7).